

# How to look younger and get the sparkle back in your life

## Pilates will help to improve your health, without going to the gym

By Carol Westmorland



**H**ave you ever wished for more 'umph' in your day? Have you ever wished for more energy at the end of your day rather than feeling drained? Have you ever wondered why people accept, and worse still, give in to their aches and pains? Why do we move the way we do?

The answer to this can be found in our way of life. We all know how it feels to stand up after sitting for a long time or how it feels to get out of a car after a long journey.

Our bodies feel locked. By and large our bodies are not quite as delicate as we would like to believe. We should be able to lift a heavy object or climb over an awkward wall. We should not place so many limits on ourselves.

It is easy to move into a way of life that doesn't challenge. It is not so easy to attempt to change once habits have been formed. The adage of 'healthy body, healthy mind' is as true today as it has ever been.

One of Joseph Pilates' favourite quotes is from German philosopher, Schiller, who said: *It is the mind which controls the body.*

Our workplace has become more sedentary and our leisure time, for many, has followed.

We tend to favour the group of muscles we use to perform our



**Superfit:** 'Pilates is simple in its theory and effective in its execution,' says Carol Westmorland

day to day activities. Then we become unbalanced. Our muscles then hold the 'memory' and that may be unnoticed until we attempt something new.

That, in turn, may put us off trying again and so the cycle continues. We find our comfort zone and stay with it even if we acknowledge its weaknesses.

On regular visits to Denmark I was always impressed with the care they took looking after their health, particularly their backs. It is perfectly normal to visit an osteopath regularly and to use correct seating in an office and have a good bed. As a nation of tall people, perhaps they understood that better than most.

As an example, hunched

shoulders are a product of a prolonged, desk-bound life and, similarly, walking with a forward tilt is the result of wearing high heels over a long period.

Well, imagine an exercise routine that can give you a firmer, flatter middle, improve your posture, and provide you with more energy. Imagine an exercise routine that makes you think. Imagine an exercise routine that lengthens. No equipment needed but you. Imagine an exercise routine that provides you with inner confidence, control, balance and strength making you feel good; wanting more.

Now imagine combines all these things into one exercise routine. This is the routine that will

change your life and your attitude to your own body.

You will adjust your desk at work, the seat of your car and you will notice those around you who have lost that special magic. This is a routine that can give you an increased vitality, make you feel years younger and improve your posture while, at the same time, toning those lazy muscles.

This is a routine that can eliminate that nagging back pain and give you back the confidence to try challenging new pursuits.

Pilates is designed to complement not replace a favourite activity and will make you enjoy it more.

It could just highlight the need to restore strength following

absence from activity through injury or a host of other reasons. Pilates is simple in its theory and effective in its execution.

■ Carol Westmorland is holding a two-hour interactive workshop at The Rhedeg Discovery Centre, Penrith on Saturday, April 26. Tickets are £15. To book your place call 01768 868000.

■ Further information on [www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk](http://www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk)

■ Carol Westmorland is also a champion cyclist who tries to ride every day for at least two hours.

She holds the 2004 National 12-hour Championship with 243.19 miles and the 2006 National 24-hour Championship with 445.41 miles. Her personal best for 10 miles is 23 minutes 18 seconds.

# My magical moment of joy meeting my deer friends

I WAS recently lucky enough to spot a couple of female red deer in the woods leading up to King's How in Borrowdale.

It was early morning and I was climbing the stony path, crunching frosty leaves and twigs underfoot like an elephant when I spotted movement in the trees ahead.

I stopped dead still, holding my breath so as not to disturb the serenity of the moment as I watched the pair moving silently and gracefully through the woods.

Miraculously, they hadn't heard me and I was able to stand and admire their fluid, effortless climbing for some minutes.

Then, I lost sight of them - they

**Guidebook writer Vivienne Crow shares her love of the great outdoors**



had disappeared, almost as magically and suddenly as they had appeared.

Spending so much time walking in the Cumbrian countryside, I am lucky to have had many close encounters with local wildlife.

Coming down from Gatescarth Pass towards Haweswater a couple of years ago, I heard a sudden whooshing noise above me.

In a split-second of confusion, I thought it was RAF low-flyers, but looking up I saw a peregrine

falcon flying at high speed towards the crags of Harter Fell; it had spotted a pigeon.

Coming at it from such a steep angle, the peregrine had effectively trapped the smaller, slower bird, which flew straight towards the rocks with no chance of escape. The peregrine seized the moment - and the pigeon - and, in a flurry of feathers, was gone with its prey.

The speed at which this had all happened was amazing - and I had probably witnessed only a fraction of the 110mph of which peregrines are said to be capable.

Last winter I was researching riverside routes for some East Cumbria Countryside Project walks booklets. I had to get

from Carlisle to Rockcliffe in time for the lunchtime bus back, so I was out just before first light.

The day dawned crisp and frosty, and there was a low, steam-like mist hanging over the River Eden.

As I drew level with Grinsdale a couple of miles downstream, I heard something splashing in the water below. I assumed it was some large salmon close to the surface.

Later on, as I passed Beaumont, I heard the noise again. With the mist having burned off by now, I stood and watched the water. Then I stood some more. And some more. Eventually, my patience paid off

and the mystery was solved. An otter broke the surface, its sleek body clearly visible just a few feet away from me. It disappeared under the water and then came up again, even closer this time.

I was spellbound - this was the first time I'd seen an otter in the wild in England, and I was surprised to see one so close to the city.

We live in a world dominated by the urban environment, so it's easy to forget that the natural world can sometimes be just around the corner - maybe just a walk away.

■ Vivienne Crow is a freelance writer specialising in outdoor pursuits.